



UPDATE

Montana Department of Commerce

Task Force Braces for Fire Season and Other Tourism Crises

The members of the Fire Season Media Task Force have not been resting on their laurels.

This group of dedicated tourism and public relations professionals, honored by Governor Judy Martz at the Governor's Conference in April for combating negative effects of media coverage of last summer's forest fires in Glacier National Park, have been bracing for the 2004 fire season. They've been hard at work preparing to tackle the same problems and tasks this summer. They're also worrying about the drought, closures of good fishing holes, rising gas prices—even the West Nile virus. If it's bad news for tourists, the task force can develop contingencies to deal with the problems.

By the time you read this, forest and prairie fires may be burning and visitors may be adjusting their itineraries because of them. The Task Force attends early morning update sessions given by firefighting officials at command posts and works the phones with state and national journalists to assure them the entire state isn't on fire. Members also marshal a campaign to keep tourism suppliers and their customers apprised of where the fires are burning, where they've caused smoke and visibility problems, and where they haven't affected the summer tourist season. When the fires threaten lodgings, the task force coordinates the relocating of guests to hotels, inns and campgrounds outside the danger zone. The Promotion Division is part of this effort.

Task force members are developing pages for the visitmt.com web site that will disseminate the information visitors need to make plans around potential hot spots and other crises. Their aim is to keep the public informed on fires and other crises



The 2003 Fire Season Media Task Force poses with plaques and Governor Judy Martz, far right, after winning the Governor's Tourism Partnership of the Year Award. From left, Victor Bjornberg, Promotion Division; Lisa Jones, LJ Communications; Amy Vanderbilt, National Park Service; Susan Doherty, Partners Creative; Rhonda Fitzgerald, Whitefish Convention and Visitors Bureau; Linda Anderson, Glacier Country.

while accentuating the positive: tell travelers where they can go and what they can do far from the restrictions imposed by fires. All in all, the Task Force helps visitors keep a healthy perspective on the problems that sometimes go along with living in or visiting a state of great natural landscapes and resources.

Scenic-Historic Byway Program Inching Toward Reality

The Montana Transportation Commission has approved a majority of draft rules for the state Scenic-Historic Byway Program. The rules were created in the past year by an eleven-member advisory council that includes nine Tourism Advisory Council members. By removing references to private property and landowners, the commission sought to make clear that only routes through public or tribal lands are eligible for designation as Scenic-Historic Byways. Now the Department of Transportation (MDT) will take up to six months to complete the state rulemaking process. Dave Galt, director of MDT, would like to finalize the rules by the end of the year.

MDT will be posting hearing schedules and public input information regarding the administrative rules process for the byway program. If you would like to receive e-mailed information on the program and the public input schedule, send an e-mail to Information about the advisory council's work is posted on Travel Montana's Intranet site: <http://travelmontana.state.mt.us/shb/>

The Scenic-Historic Byways Advisory Council included TAC members Homer Staves, Scott Asche, Maureen Averill, Kathy Brown, Ramona Holt, Mike Scholz, Clark Whitehead, George Willett and R.J. Young, along with MDT's Dick Turner and Ellen Baumlmer of the Montana Historical Society.

Film Office Brings Big Sky to L.A.

Sten Iversen, manager of the Montana Film Office, and project coordinator John Ansotegui came home with 75 leads after attending the 2004 Locations Trade Show in Los Angeles

HOLLYWOOD

in April. More than 2,000 industry professionals—mostly producers, production managers and location managers—attended. Montana teams up with Wyoming, South Dakota, and Idaho to have a larger presence and more impact at the sold-out show of more than 220 exhibitors from all over the world. “The competition for Hollywood film projects and dollars is extremely competitive” Iversen says. “When we partner with nearby states and market our region as ‘Film the West,’ we can compete with other film commissions with larger budgets, and emerging locations like

New Zealand and Australia.” A website, www.filmthewest.com, was created in April to attract attention to the region, and to each individual film office website.

Audience Wanted for Lewis and Clark Showcase

The presenters are ready to be in the spotlight, and they’re hoping for a receptive audience in Livingston June 17-18. Poets, musicians, living history presenters and other performing

artists will showcase their Lewis and Clark-themed acts in this event scheduled for the Livingston Christian Center, 1400 Mount Baldy Drive.

The presenters will be performing 12-minute “snapshots” of the acts they specialize in, which portray or teach about Lewis and Clark and their Corps of Discovery. “We’re still looking for people to sit in the audience,” said Clint Blackwood, director of the Montana Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission. The commission hopes to have representatives from community and civic groups, municipal and state agencies, and chambers of commerce who are interested in finding “good Lewis and Clark programming.”

Potential bookers and others interested can register at the door. Admission to the showcase is \$45. Call Gail Brockbank or e-mail to gailb@mt.net.

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Corrections Department

We goofed! The May Update claimed that we mentioned Community Tourism Assessment Program (CTAP) Action Plans filed by Sanders County and Eureka in the April Update, but the news got cut from April’s issue due to a lack of space. Here’s the scoop: CTAP action committees in Sanders County and Eureka have identified the tourism-related projects they’ll work on with their \$10,000 grants from the Promotion Division.

The Sanders County CTAP Committee will pursue two projects: development and

installation of three information kiosks at strategic locations in the county, and a feasibility study on creating a public, handicapped-accessible fishing access site in Thompson Falls. In a related project, the Sanders County group will develop a county-wide travel guide.

The Eureka CTAP Committee will remodel an existing county building in the Tobacco Valley Historical Village Complex into a Visitor Information Center/office facility. Eureka and Sanders County were involved in the 2002-2003 session of CTAP.

Superhost Trainings

Due to some erroneous information we received, last month’s listing of Superhost trainings was inaccurate. Here is a corrected schedule:

Date	Town	Location	Time	Call to Register
June 10	Big Sky	Comfort Inn	8:30 am-12	995-3000
June 15	Great Falls	GF Mall	1:30-5 pm	761-4434
June 15	Great Falls	GF Mall	6-9:30 pm	761-4434
June 16	Ronan	Signal TV	6-9:30 pm	676-8300
June 16	Kalispell	FVCC	9 am-12:30 pm	756-3674
June 17	Helena	Chamber of Commerce	1:30-5 pm	442-4120
June 23	Kalispell	Central School Museum	1-4:30 pm	756-3674

Calendar of Events

June

- 6-7 Tourism Advisory Council Meeting, Bozeman
- 9-10 Affordable Meetings West, Long Beach, CA
- 16-26 Independent Feature Project Film Festival, Los Angeles
- 19-26 TIA See America Week
- 19-26 Promotion Division Sales Mission to UK and Scotland

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to:
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